

# FY 2021-22 Budget Amendment Form

## Budget Direction

Parental Leave for Public Safety Personnel

## Strategic Outcome Alignment

Safety, Health and Environment, Government That Works for All

## Lead Sponsor

Kitchen

## Cosponsors (optional)

CMs Casar, Ellis, Fuentes

## Amount and Source of Funding

Ongoing	One-Time	FTEs	Source of Funds

## Additional Information

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## **Public Safety Childbirth Leave Program**

According to the US Department of Labor, only about 4 percent of fire fighters in the United States are women. The Austin Fire Department (AFD) proudly boasts almost 8% women among its ranks. Even though AFD hiring practices display strong female candidate numbers, attracting women to the fire service continues to be a challenge, as it does for all emergency response services. While the City of Austin offers parental leave to civilian employees who qualify for FMLA after the birth of a child, adoption of a child, or foster placement, extending benefits to sworn female members of Austin's emergency response services is not currently in place. Extending these benefits would be a major step toward equity as well as attracting women to AFD, EMS and APD and retaining the professionals already serving in these departments. The city would be further developing a culture that supports families in our emergency response departments.

### **Background:**

On average over the last five years, for example, two female AFD firefighters gave birth to a child each year. Although FMLA is helpful, female firefighters must still use their own sick and vacation leave for the recovery of childbirth.

Often, women begin families early in their public safety careers and do not have enough time accumulated to cover the bonding and recovery time necessary after a new child. This forces some to utilize leave without pay, exhaust all of their accumulated leave (leaving no time off for needed vacations and emergent family issues that will arise with a new family), or choose between their career and having a family. Fortunately, the level of stress these decisions put onto new parents can be alleviated.

### **Proposal:**

The city manager is directed to develop implementation and funding options to extend parental leave benefits, including new mother provisions and alternate return to work options, to sworn employees of AFD APD and EMS. Consultation with professionals from each of the departments could determine whether different options would be appropriate for each department. The manager is directed to return to council with the options by December 14, 2021.